

Fast Car by ObeyDontStray

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Summary:

Once there was a time that Joyce really loved Lonnie. Based heavily off of the Tracy Chapman song 'Fast Car'.

Fast Car

Joyce glanced across the car at Lonnlie. He had one arm hanging out the window, the other on the wheel, the cool night breeze blowing through his hair. The lights of town zoomed past as he cruised down main street in the dying sunlight. She reached out to turn down the radio.

"Lonnlie, let's run away." She braved. "We've got nothing to loose." He shot a glance at her, a silent go ahead to keep talking. "My Momma's gone and Daddy's drinking himself to death. Your parents ditched you. Let's run across the border and into the city. Anywhere has got to be better than here."

"Just me and you?" He asked, shaking a cigarette from his packet and between his lips. She reached to steady the wheel when his hands left it to cup his cigarette and light it. Hands back on the wheel, he drew in a deep drag and exhaled through his nose. "Yeah, I've got a little put back from my job at the convenience store. We can both get jobs and rent a little apartment. Maybe get married." She said sheepishly. Lonnlie stretched his arm across the back of the seat. "C'mere baby." He said, reaching out for her. She slid across the bench seat and nestled herself under his arm, he drew her in close.

"Say yes." She encouraged. "C'mon, let's do it. Tonight. Let's drive to the city. I don't want to die here, Lonnlie."

He sighed and pulled onto the open highway leading out of town.

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A year later Joyce looked back on that night. They left with nothing but the clothes on their backs and Lonnlie's car where they slept in the beginning until it got to cold. All her savings went towards food and clothing and it went quickly. When the weather grew harsh, they moved into the shelter. Lonnlie routinely struck out on jobs, never hearing back on applications. He says the world is against him. Her shift at the supermarket ended at eight. She counted up her till and cashed out for the night, sneaking into the bathroom one last time with a paper bag clutched in hand.

Lonnlie picked her up for one of their late night drives in search of cheap fast food. He had his arm around her shoulder, the cool night air blowing through their hair as the radio played.

"Lonnlie, I'm pregnant."

Seven years later Joyce sat at the kitchen table, writing out a budget as her seven year old and one year old sat playing in the floor nearby. The rent on their apartment was killing them. Lonnie stumbled in, drunk as always. He walked right past the boys, never bothering to speak to them. He leaned into kiss Joyce, his breath stinking of gin. She shoved him away. Without a job he spent all their free money on drinking. Joyce had a little money tucked away from him and she hatched a plan that night.

Joyce held a suitcase, all that she and her boys owned in this world. "I'm going home to Hawkins." She announced to Lonnie before he headed out for the bar. "You can come with us, or you can stay here, but my boys and I are going home."

Her declaration was met with a hail of yelling and broken glass and he gripped her wrist just a little too tightly when she tried to leave. In the end Joyce loaded her boys on the nearest Greyhound and wrapped her arm tightly around them, the cool wind blowing through the open windows and through their hair. City lights zoomed past them as the bus headed towards Hawkins.

Years later he returned from the city. Not Lonnie Byers. A man made of sturdier stuff, a man of merit. Jim Hopper returned to Hawkins, leaving a broken life behind him. Joyce found herself wondering late at night what would have happened if she had chosen him. If she had turned her head at the sight of Lonnie Byers and ran to the city with Jim.

Five years later she traveled through hell and back with the brooding law man. She clutched her youngest son to her chest as Hopper rushed him to the hospital, the lights zooming past the truck and Joyce slid them across the bench seat and under his arm. Across the border and into the city. Jim's hand squeezed her shoulder and for the first time in forever, she felt safe.